

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present Amendment, Claims 1-10 will be cancelled and Claims 11-16 will be newly added.

Support for the newly added claims may be found in the specification and claims, including the drawings, as originally filed.

The Office Action objects to the drawings as the screw-action via the closure is not shown. The claims as amended cancel this feature, and it is believed this objection is overcome and that therefore no new drawings are required in the case. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 2 and 3 were rejected under 35 USC 112, first paragraph again relating to the screw action closure. Again with cancellation of that subject matter from the claims, it is believed this rejection has been overcome. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 4, and 8-10 were objected to under 37 CFR 1.75 (c) as being in improper multiple dependent form. Newly added claims 11-16 remove multiple dependency and it is believed this objection is therefore overcome. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 USC Section 102(b) as being anticipated by Eaton. Applicants respectfully traverse. Eaton does not disclose as combined pack with storage containers each having a handle. The combined pack according to Eaton simply comprises containers such as metal drink cans without a handle. Consequently the feature (b) of the Claim 11 wherein "the connector is pushed through the handles of the storage containers" cannot possibly be disclosed by Eaton. Claim 11 is novel over Eaton, and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 5 and 6 were rejected under 35 USC Section 102 (b) as being anticipated by Erickson. Applicants respectfully traverse. Erickson discloses as combined pack with two containers 14 each having a handle 24 as well as a neck 18 and with a device/carrier 12 connecting the two containers 14. The device 12 comprises a central bridge section 26 and container holders 28 pivotally mounted on the ends of the bridge section 26. Each container holder 28 is an annular collar. The carrier 12 is assembled on the two containers 14 by pushing the carrier collars 28 downwardly over the necks 18 of the containers 14 (see Erickson Fig. 1 and

column 4, lines 1-24). So the device 12 of Erickson does not comprise a connector and a closure, wherein the connector is pushed through the handles of the containers and the closure is plugged or pushed on. Claim 11 is therefore novel over Erickson and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 7 is rejected under 35 USC Section 103 (a) as being obvious over Eaton, although the discussion following refers to Erickson, and so Applicants are not sure which reference is being applied. Applicants assume the Office Action refers to Erickson in this regard, and Applicants respectfully traverse.

As mentioned above, Erickson discloses container holders 28 which engage the containers at their necks. Erickson does not give any hint to modify the connecting device 12 in such a way that the container holders 28 hold the containers at or near the handles 24.

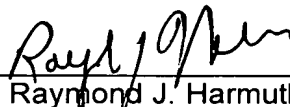
According to Claim 11 in the present application, the device 1 comprising the connector 2 and the closure 4 is placed at the handles. That allows the containers 10 to be emptied simultaneously (see the specification at page 2, first section). So, for instance, if the position of the handle of the single container has been optimized in terms of handling and holding the container when it is emptied and/or when it is carried (balanced weight conditions, low hold momentum etc.), this optimized position is taken by the device 1 automatically, when connecting the containers. Therefore, the device 1 does not only serve as a connector, but is also an ergonomic/optimized handle of the combined pack. Since these features and their advantages are not mentioned or discussed by Erickson, Claim 11 is clearly not rendered obvious by Erickson.

With the foregoing amendments and remarks it is believed the claims have been placed in condition for allowance. Review and consideration of the claims and allowance of the same are respectfully requested,

Respectfully submitted,

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